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17 >>: Jennifer Raitt: Good evening
18 everybody. Thank you for being here and showing up. I
19 am the Director of Planning and community development
20 for the Town of Arlington and my department actually
21 works on a range of different planning and community
22 development activity in town, short-term planning,

23 longterm planning and economic development housing,
24 arts and culture, transportation and environmental
25 planning, very expansive work that we do, and we also

2

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 do a lot of grant writing and support work with other
2 departments to help with various towns, including
3 things like very big infrastructure projects,
4 accessibility, helping with restoration of properties
5 and redevelopment. And as part of that, one of the
6 programs that we manage is the community development
7 block grant program, a federally funded program that
8 the town has been a part of as an entitlement community
9 for 45 years. We receive about a million dollars
10 annually as part of that, and there are many different
11 Federal Rules and regulations and requirements that as
12 an entitlement community, we are obliged to follow, and
13 one of those has to do with the Americans with
14 Disabilities Act. The town in general needs to be
15 compliant with the ADA. And part of gaining that
16 compliance is self-evaluation and transition plan.
17 Ours has been out of date. There has been updates
18 during time. Originally conducted in 1994 swiftly
19 after the 93 title had been passed and required or

20 issued, rather, the regulations, and so we wanted to
21 provide the town with a document to be able to
22 prioritize improvements to comply with ADA at town
23 owned properties and in our programs and activities and
24 services, so that we can make things more equitable in
25 all of our public buildings and spaces and also ensure

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 we are removing any barriers to access to those
2 programs and opportunities.

3 So working with, at the time, Julie
4 Wayman, who is now in the town manager's office, we
5 worked to secure funding through the Mass. Office on
6 Disability through their planning grant program and
7 partnered with the community development block grant
8 program to be able to hire the Institute for Human
9 Centered Design to help us with that self-evaluation,
10 and the Transition Plan, building offer of some work
11 that had been recently completed. So they were helping
12 us to sort of fill in some of the blanks, and we worked
13 with many of the people who were on this, called on the
14 meeting, but also a number of different departments.
15 Pretty much every department in the town participated
16 as well as members of different commissions, and sort

17 of an overall ADA team.

18 And what we did was really a very
19 comprehensive review that you will see a lot more about
20 soon from Meghan and her team. To really understand
21 what we need to deal with and what we need to grapple
22 with in terms of the structural changes that might be
23 needed in order to have a compliant town and access to
24 policies and procedures that we use to ensure that
25 access.

4

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 And with the Transition Plan, what it
2 allows the town to do is a couple things, one is
3 estimate the cost of compliance and two, really
4 prioritize what we must accomplish, and you will see in
5 the plan, how that prioritization looks. That
6 prioritization is important because the town has a
7 five-year capital improvement plan, and that is just
8 one of the many resources that we have locally that
9 helps us to gain that compliance and appropriate money
10 towards making sure that we are removing barriers and
11 achieving ADA compliance overall as well as many other
12 grant opportunities.

13 So I am very excited that we are doing

14 this. I long have been with accessibility. I
15 participated about 25 years ago now in the community,
16 access monitor program, and I have been part of that
17 program since then. It was one of my first jobs and
18 there is always a lot to learn. There is always
19 something new to learn from people who experience a
20 lack of access, and to listen to those issues is very
21 important as part of that. So I am looking forward to
22 hearing the presentation and also looking forward to
23 hearing the feedback from people who are using our --
24 continue to have concerns and can help the town to
25 achieve these goals.

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 Ms. Fletcher: If I can jump in. That's
2 a great story. You actually did that 25 years ago. I
3 don't know if you know that our organization actually
4 created that tool. We were the -- we were called --
5 environment. We have long ark of relationship. There
6 just serendipity.

7 >>: Jenner Raitt: I have the booklet
8 and trained my own staff because I know how important
9 it is, and it's essential to doing community
10 development work.

11 Ms. Fletcher: And people confident
12 about it are people who actually take action.

13 >>: Jenner Raitt: With that I will
14 hand it over to Meghan.

15 Ms. Dufresne: Okay. So I am Meghan
16 Dufresne. I am the project manager and working with
Valerie Fletcher,

17 Executive Director of IHCD, on the Town of Arlington
18 Transition Plan.

19 A little bit about our background. We
20 work at the Institute for Human Centered Design, which
21 is an international design nonprofit dedicated to
22 enhancing the experiences of people of all ages and
23 abilities through excellence in design. A few of the
24 things that we do to meet our mission are providing
25 education and training on accessibility and inclusive

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 design. We provide technical assistance as part of the
2 New England ADA Center, and we offer consulting on
3 accessibility and inclusive design for both physical
4 and digital environments as well as design services for
5 physical and digital environments. We also offer -- we
6 do research using experts who are people with -- lived
7 experience of functional limitations, and we for

8 Arlington, we did a study with user experts on the
9 website and the web report and oftentimes we will train
10 user experts to do different sites or test different
11 products, and that's another way that we studied the
12 environments.

13 So our two most important beliefs are
14 that designed powerful and profoundly influences
15 everyone in our sense of confidence, comfort and
16 control and that design matters most at the edges of
17 the spectrum. If you get design to work for the most
18 extreme conditions, then it will work better for
19 everybody. So one of our other projects is the New
20 England ADA Center. It's one of 10 national ADA
21 Centers that will provide information, guidance and
22 training on the ADA, and you can call this number and
23 it will connect you with one of our specialists. And
24 any time you have a question on the ADA, feel free to
25 call this number. And so getting -- so Arlington, what

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 we did, the first step in our process was to work on a
2 self-evaluation plan which involved evaluating a
3 representative set of facilities and outdoor areas, and
4 we looked at these pieces of the environment for the

5 ADA and the MA B521 CMR State Code compliance.

6 In addition, we sent surveys out to
7 different departments to get an idea upon the policies
8 and procedures of the town and understand more about
9 the program, accessibility of each program within the
10 town, which is the primary obligation of the Town of
11 Arlington under the ADA. We took the results of these
12 two areas in addition to meeting with the Disability
13 Commission which was very helpful in -- I think I got
14 more feedback from this Disability Commission than any
15 other city or town that I have worked with in the
16 state, and it was very helpful to us, to help us know
17 what to focus in on, what was important to you as a
18 whole and so we also rolled that in with the surveys
19 from all the departments of Arlington and combining
20 those two, those two areas, we produced a ADA
21 Transition Plan, which is a capital planning
22 and -- budgeting tool that is created from a set of
23 corrective actions that is identified in the
24 self-evaluation process.

25 And so the program accessibility

1 standard under the ADA, it requires that the city or

2 town ensure that each program service and activity when
3 viewed in its entirety, is accessible to people with
4 disabilities. It does not necessarily require a public
5 entity to make each existing facility accessible, and
6 it does not require a public entity to take any action
7 that it can demonstrate would result in undue financial
8 or administrative burden. Behind the ADA and the US
9 accessibility requirements is to provide an integrated
10 setting for equal participation, and for this,
11 individuals with disabilities must be integrated to the
12 maximum extent appropriate. Separate programs are
13 permitted where necessary to ensure equal opportunity,
14 and a separate program must be appropriate to the
15 particular individual. That being said, individuals
16 with disabilities cannot be excluded from the regular
17 program or required to accept special services or
18 benefits. So when looking at different facilities, we
19 have three strategies that we typically look to.
20 First, for the facility, we have the option to relocate
21 programs services and activities at an accessible
22 location within current facilities. We have the option
23 to relocate program services and activities to another
24 facility.

25 And third, we have the option to

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 renovate the facility to ensure that program services
2 and activities can be run in the facility, and with
3 Arlington, this is the option that we chose most often.
4 And so our deliverables consisted of self-evaluation
5 reports as well as illustrated catalogs with
6 photographs of each ADA or Massachusetts code issue as
7 with a recommendation or remedy the issue. And then
8 this is generated into a Transition Plan Excel
9 database, that it will have a priority and a cost
10 assigned to each item in the Transition Plan.

11 So the first part of our study was a
12 look at several new -- several facilities that hadn't
13 been looked at before, and these included four
14 community safety buildings at 12 school buildings, one
15 Cemetery Building and one park facility, two libraries
16 and two facilities managed by the Redevelopment Board
17 and five buildings that were under the category of
18 other town owned buildings, that are buildings that the
19 town typically doesn't run programs in but often will
20 rent the facilities out.

21 The second part of the reports included
22 a web accessibility review as well as rolling in
23 previous reports, like, the sidewalk, street

24 evaluation, ADA self-evaluation of recreation and
25 pedestrian push button inventory, and so these were

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 brought into the ADA Transition Plan for cost and
2 priority. So I was going to talk about -- I had
3 Julie -- the most facing buildings and important
4 buildings in the town, and this is showing some of them
5 at the Town Hall Annex, the Community Safety Building,
6 the Robbins and Fox Library, the former Dallin Library,
7 the Bath House At Arlington Reservoir and Whittmore
8 Robbins House.

9 And so a few common issues that we found
10 across different buildings and the most crucial issues
11 are the lack of an accessible route into the Fox Branch
12 Library and as well as the Community Room in the
13 basement. Similarly, there is no accessible route to
14 the reservoir bath house and beach. So these were very
15 important issues that we felt need attention. At 23
16 Maple Street, that is rented out currently, there is a
17 lack of accessible toilet facilities. We found that
18 service counters oftentimes, there is a lack of an
19 accessible service counter in several facilities
20 including the Bath House, Community Safety Buildings

21 and the Town Hall. And so a few more issues that we
22 found typically, were oftentimes in the play area, they
23 were lacking accessible booths, such as the one at the
24 Whittmore Robbins House where Massachusetts has very
25 strict standards about what is an accessible route

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 within a playground.

2 So at the Community Safety Building,
3 they looked an accessible shower and toilet facilities
4 for detainees and for -- in the Town Hall Auditorium
5 and Robbins Library, they were lacking assistive
6 listening systems in the meeting rooms, and Town Hall
7 Auditorium also lacks wheelchair spaces as well as
8 designated aisle seats.

9 So I did base diagrams just to show you
10 the typical costs of each building with Town Hall Annex
11 and annex being the most expensive of the buildings to
12 correct, and then the other, probably the Robbins
13 Library would be the least expensive. This is just to
14 give you an idea of the different costs of bringing
15 each one, building, into compliance. In addition, to
16 studying the codes, we studied items that went beyond
17 the code to make the building work better for everyone,

18 so these items are in costs, aren't required by the
19 code, but they are included and the costs aren't
20 included in the Transition Plan, but these are noted as
21 enhance usability, best practice recommendations. So
22 with the Town Hall at annex, as it's such an important
23 building to the town, we found a number of things they
24 could be improved to help people navigate the building.
25 We felt that a study due to the building being so

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 complex with so many level changes, a way minding study
2 would be very useful. We would recommend working with
3 a lighting consultant to improve the lighting inside
4 and outside the building to help people with vision
5 difficulty and make the building safer for everyone. I
6 know it was a big concern from the Disability
7 Commission about the safety in the balcony and it is
8 kind of a scary area to walk through.

9 We would recommend installing rubber
10 caps with a contrasting color for people to sense the
11 steps in the balcony, and we recommend adding floor
12 level lighting and work with the Disability Commission
13 on their ideas to improve safety for visually impaired
14 visitors to the balcony. In addition, we would

15 recommend installing hand holds wherever possible in
16 the upstairs area. The other area in Town Hall that we
17 recommended is the area between the annex and Town Hall
18 where people have to -- people who can't navigate
19 stairs must go outside the building in order to get
20 into another lift to get into the annex. We recommend
21 looking into providing a covered connector for this
22 area so that everybody can have some shelter from the
23 elements. And this is a direct recommendation from the
24 Disability Commission. We recommend that each public
25 building have an automatic door opener at all public

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 entrances, even when not required by law and so this is
2 showing the Community Safety Building one entrance that
3 is not even an accessible entrance, but for safety and
4 to help people get in the building, we recommend
5 automatic door openers even when not required.

6 So the Assembly Public Building less
7 frequented by the public, and they include the Fire
8 Department facilities, the Cemetery Department, the
9 Mount Gilboa House and Jarvis House, Legal Department.
10 So the issues that we found in the semi-public
11 buildings include a lack of accessible route to the

12 Jarvis House, Mount Gilboa House, and the Cemetery
13 Building. We found that door hardware is often not
14 operable with a closed fist in these buildings, and we
15 found similar issues with look of egress and
16 designation sign with raised characters and -- and then
17 some of these facilities, like the Jarvis House and the
18 Cemetery Building lack accessible toilet rooms.

19 And so the picture, the image in the
20 slide is showing you the entrance with a couple stairs
21 going into the Cemetery Building. So looking at the
22 buildings cost wise for semipublic building, the
23 cemetery and Jarvis House cost the most because they
24 require accessible routes being brought into the
25 building and Park Circle, Fire Station is least

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 expensive. For enhanced usability, we were mainly --
2 we were looking to the meeting room in the central fire
3 station at providing an adjustable height ADA
4 accessible podium in the conference room.

5 At the Highland and Park Circle fire
6 stations, our main entrance usability recommendation
7 was to consider locating an accessible parking street
8 near the facility entrance in addition thought parking

9 lots and at the Cemetery Building, we would recommend
10 providing an accessible parking space on the drive by
11 the main entrance as the parking lot is down a hill
12 somewhat. The one building where we recommended
13 relocating all public programs, it's currently not
14 being used for any public programs, and it's off a
15 steep set of stairs, is the Mount Gilboa House. So we
16 looked at 12 school facilities, and these are mainly
17 ever elementary school within the town. In addition to
18 the two middle schools, Gibbs Middle School for sixth
19 grade students and Ottoson Middle School for seventh
20 and eighth grade student, and we looked at a few
21 miscellaneous buildings such as the Peirce Field Snack
22 Shack and the Spy Pond Field House. As well as the
23 Parmenter School currently being rented out. So these
24 are a few photos of the issues that we found that were
25 pretty common among the schools. The Parmenter School

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 main issue is the front entrance is not accessible. I
2 believe I read that they are looking into making it
3 accessible route to this entrance now.

4 At the Brackett Elementary School, they
5 were lacking accessible sinks within the classroom.

6 At Bishop Elementary School, they were
7 lacking accessible desks that people -- children using
8 wheelchairs could use.

9 The image from Hardy Elementary School
10 is showing a mat that is not secured to the floor.

11 Peirce Elementary School, there was an
12 issue with a playground not having accessible intact
13 surface around them and artisan middle school, there
14 were issues with the laboratories and the laboratory
15 safety equipment such as the emergency shower in this
16 picture at the bottom: The main issues we saw were
17 accessible routes playgrounds, garden, sport areas and
18 picnic tables and the picture in the top right is
19 showing one of these gardens that is very small and
20 lacking accessible route of 48 inches at the Bishop
21 Elementary School.

22 Oftentimes, we found that dining or work
23 surfaces were not accessible in each area. A toilet
24 rooms, some of the common issues that we found were
25 unwrapped pipes that were not protected underneath

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 laboratories to prevent against -- to prevent users
2 from burning their knees on the pipes. We found

3 noncompliant grab bars and oftentimes, we found toilet
4 paper dispensers similar to the one in the bottom image
5 where you have to pull the paper, and it didn't allow
6 continuous paper flow.

7 Similar to the other buildings,
8 designation and egress signage was not compliant or
9 mounted properly in the schools in many locations, and
10 so this is kind of a breakdown of the schools based on
11 cost, lack of elevator, and had the most issues to it,
12 but it's also not a public school right now, and I am
13 not sure if the town is planning to use it.

14 After that, Hardy and Ottoson and
15 Brackett are the next expensive schools to renovate.
16 We would recommend space beside the bench so a people
17 using the wheelchair can fit shoulder to shoulder with
18 somebody seated on the bench. We would recommend a lot
19 of times at stairs like this, that are older, handrails
20 aren't required by the code, but we would recommend
21 providing handrails wherever you can especially
22 dangerous stairs like this one at Ottoson Middle School
23 going to the baseball field. We recommend providing an
24 adjustable height medical table at the -- at a few of
25 the school's health offices, and we would recommend

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 ensuring that some of the coat hooks are located no
2 higher than 36 inches in a kindergarten classroom.

3 In addition, these stairs for instance,
4 color contrast steps would help people with vision
5 difficulties sense where the stair treads are, and
6 improve visible and help prevent falls.

7 Okay. So now this is going back to an
8 old report where our firm had looked at 33 recreation
9 facilities. In 2014, I had worked on this project with
10 two coworkers. I wasn't one of the leads, but I had
11 some experience on it, and so what we did was this
12 original report is only a MS Word, in a MS Word
13 document and so we kind of clarified the order of
14 magnitude cost estimates, and prioritize every issue
15 within an Excel spreadsheet so that the town would be
16 able to budget all, everything that we recommended.
17 And this color chart is just kind of showing the most
18 expensive renovations would be the Ed Burns Arena, Spy
19 Pond Field and Tennis Court, and the least expensive
20 would be Hill's Hill and Gibbs Gym and things like
21 that.

22 And for this, I was going to have
23 Valerie talk a little bit about the public rights of
24 way and bringing those reports into the Transition

25 Plan.

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 Ms. Fletcher: Thank you, Meghan. Thank
2 you very much.

3 So I think people are aware, it's likely
4 that this savvy group is aware, that the Town of
5 Arlington had done -- had a consulting contract. There
6 is a -- two consulting projects with these impressive
7 deliverables from VHB an engineering firm, and there is
8 an extraordinary amount of detail. The studies were
9 done in 2015 and 2017. So this is really looking at
10 your public rights of way.

11 And I think all of us would agree that
12 there is a tremendous amount of need for corrective
13 action in the public right of way in Arlington. The
14 challenge with these reports was that there was no --
15 other than basic condition issues. It was overwhelming
16 amount of money. 12 or \$13 million, and that wasn't
17 going to happen overnight, so there was a need for a
18 way to get your arms around how to prioritize your
19 issues with sidewalks and curb cuts in intersections
20 particularly, accessible pedestrian signals, and that
21 was built right into your RFP, and we had -- I think we

22 had an appreciation from the get-go that would be a
23 challenge and indeed it was, but one that lent itself
24 to really just wrestling with it, and that's what we
25 did.

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 You probably have to advance that.
2 Ms. Dufresne: Okay.
3 Ms. Fletcher: This is how we tackled
4 it. We developed a prioritization scheme building from
5 what the town had already done. The town grappled with
6 this about a year before and had come up with something
7 trying to figure out how do we actually say, this is
8 the sidewalk or this is the curb cut we need to tackle.
9 We played with that scheme and tried to make that work,
10 but it took a little to be able to actually come up
11 with something that was a useable strategy. Mike
12 [name] really wonderful in his commitment around this,
13 he had been leading the effort for, I believe, a way to
14 try to prioritize all this data and help us to
15 understand a practical method of -- this is how much
16 money we can project. Don't give us anything that
17 isn't looking at the amount of money that we expect to
18 spend in the next five years.

19 I think Julian referenced planning in
20 five year chunks, so that was really how we grappled
21 with this. So we had annual expected funding in each
22 category.

23 Meghan, next slide, please.

24 So we mapped the location of all the
25 town properties, and that was partly GSA challenge, but

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 part of what needed to be done, hadn't been done, to
2 recognize your responsibility as the public entity.
3 You also have to facilitate access for public
4 accommodation run by other burst the connect -- but you
5 are the connective tissue. You provide the connective
6 tissue so we can make sure people get to subsidized
7 housing, retail community, and think about how
8 important that is when retail has suffered, retailed
9 and restaurants have suffered so much during the last
10 few months. So thinking about what does it take to
11 make sure people can use them. Churches, healthcare
12 settings, recreation and entertainment. So that's how
13 we really -- we really develop a database of all of
14 these resources for the Town of Arlington and figured
15 out really where do you get the biggest bang for the

16 buck based on density of where those are located.
17 There is plenty of problems in the neighborhoods
18 overwhelming in residential, but those are not really
19 in the first five years. The first five years we
20 really are recommending priority on public and -- in
21 places of public accommodation.

22 So next slide.

23 We had two other priorities, trying to
24 generate a five-year plan for those three key elements
25 and successful features, and you have done such an

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 admirable job of trying to figure out accessible
2 pedestrian signals but it is a tough nut to crack and
3 do it well. In some cases, the pedestrian signals were
4 there. You bought them, but they were in the wrong
5 place and installed wrong and something was problematic
6 since they were not useable, not working order was a
7 fairly common problem. We also had to grapple with
8 detectable warnings on curb cuts, and you've got --
9 you've got significant Metro Boston meters, people with
10 vision on your accessible -- this is a big issue. And
11 one of the things that is very useful to understand you
12 may well know this, is that these are not required in

13 the ADA. However, they were chosen by the U.S.
14 department -- responsible for the implementation of the
15 ADA in their property and things funded with their
16 money, detectable warnings are required. Arlington
17 should well know since a federally funded road cuts
18 right through or federally funded through the state,
19 Route 2 cuts right down the heart of the city or the
20 town. There are areas where the argument is clear, you
21 really should be using detectable warnings on curb
22 cuts. So that was another element that we put into
23 there, and the Department of Transportation has adopted
24 the same requirement as the federal.

25 Meghan, next.

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 So we are quickly going to show you.

2 Just how did we organize this?

3 So this is teared in, you know, in terms
4 of the order of priority. So it's sort of red, orange,
5 yellow, blue and green, and we wrote down every single
6 element and focusing on what you can do in five years.
7 You can do a lot in five years if you have a sense of
8 priority. Curb cut was another example, and we have
9 spreadsheets for each of these broken down in that

10 order of priority. Exactly where they are.

11 Meghan, next slide.

12 Accessible Pedestrian Signals are really
13 important things. They are enormously valuable to all
14 kinds of people. One of the challenges, the \$20,000
15 cost for every intersection. It's a shame if they
16 aren't done properly, so they are a safe tool for
17 people to cross the street with confidence.

18 Next slide.

19 I think we might have missed a sidewalk.
20 It's sidewalks. Again, a different method of
21 evaluating them, and in this case, we were really
22 looking at conditions of sidewalks. And again, the
23 report that the HCD did, sidewalks all over town. We
24 prioritize density of places where people really need
25 to get to and the public at large needs to use, not

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 priority advertising residential neighborhood which is
2 also important, but in terms of tackling your big
3 problem in five years, what can you get an investment
4 in this initial period. So sidewalks are the other and
5 in that, we really were looking just at condition.

6 Are they crumbling? Are they dangerous?

7 So we were always throughout this
8 process, looking at where did you have situations that
9 were real liability for the town, and in many cases the
10 sidewalk condition was a vulnerability for the Town of
11 Arlington where a lawsuit based on broken sidewalks was
12 a realistic worry, so that is how works were done.

13 So we are happy to answer questions
14 about this when Meghan has wrapped up, and I know it's
15 complicated, but happy to explain how it was done,
16 why -- what the rationale is based on when we finish.

17 So thank you, Meghan. Off to you.

18 Ms. Dufresne: I just have a couple more
19 points to make before we open for questions, but I
20 wanted to talk a little bit about the web review. So
21 that some of the main issues with the website were that
22 the main menu is lacking attributes to make it
23 navigable for keyboard and read screen users. The
24 links and expanded menus are inaccessible to keyboard
25 users. There were issues with the property search

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DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 labels being unintuitive and impossible for screen
2 reader users. Their color contrast issues around the
3 website and insufficient alternate text and RM labels.

4 So looking at the policies of procedures
5 of the town, we sent out a survey to each department.
6 We do see that the town does have an ADA coordinator,
7 so that's a very good plus. There is -- excuse me --
8 we found that there is a need to standardize practice,
9 and include policies and all materials, including the
10 website and in public buildings. Similarly with
11 grievance procedures, there needs to be a policy that's
12 created, implemented, and easy for people to find.
13 With reasonable modification policies, practices, and
14 procedures, we felt that from the questionnaires that
15 all staff, it would benefit from a training to
16 understand their responsibilities.

17 So with effective communication, we felt
18 with Arlington, given its commitment to being age
19 friendly, the town should focus on things -- it has as
20 robust system of completing communication needs of
21 people who are deaf, hard of hearing, low vision, or
22 speech access ability. We recommend the training by
23 our New England ADA Center for all front line staff on
24 effective communication.

25 And, finally, we always recommend that

1 each city and town designate a single employee with the
2 responsibilities for effective communication.

3 And so these are just some good examples
4 of things that we saw that were positive around town
5 that I wanted to share with you. The Peirce School
6 Playground is all a rubber surface, which we feel is
7 what we recommend as it's required in Massachusetts to
8 at least be rubberized around the play components, but
9 oftentimes when you mix rubber and wood chips and wood
10 chips kind of get everywhere and obstruct the paths.
11 And so we felt that Peirce School Playground was a good
12 example. The Gibbs School Raised Planting Bed is
13 another good example of an inclusive design feature and
14 could be used by a variety of people.

15 And then we just have another few
16 examples of an accessible desk we found at Gibbs
17 School, a drinking fountain that is accessible and
18 shielded, so it's not a protruded object at the school
19 and study Robbins Library Study Carrel.

20 With that, we can turn it over to your
21 questions.

22 >>: Thank you so much, Meghan, and
23 Valerie. Really appreciate the presentation and so
24 much detail that went into the process, and what you've
25 shared with us tonight.

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 Janice, I see you have your hand up.

2 >>: Yes.

3 Thank you. This has been really
4 interesting. I haven't been involved. I have been in
5 Arlington since 1981, and this is my first foray into
6 this arena. I have many questions, but I will focus on
7 a couple, and then I can e-mail the rest. One comment.
8 As far as communication issues and dealing with people
9 with disabilities, Massachusetts Commission for the
10 Deaf and Hard of Hearing has what we call the CATT
11 Department, Communication Access Technology and
12 Training, and they come out for free to assess
13 communication needs for deaf, deafblind, Hard of
14 Hearing people, so they are a really good resource.
15 Also, my husband was hit by a hit and run car at that
16 intersection of Mass. Ave. and Paul Revere Road by
17 Trader Joes and Starbucks, and I don't know how we can
18 make sure that there is a pedestrian walk light there.
19 I would love to know how to make that happen so that
20 somebody else does not suffer the way my husband did.
21 One thing that I noticed is that most of
22 the accessibility issues, ADA issues, the focus was on

23 physical accessibility, and while I do not discount
24 that at all, my focus of course would be on other kinds
25 of accessibility, accessible for people who are deaf,

27

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 deafblind, and Hard of Hearing. I can't remember
2 exactly. Does anyone know, is there a loop system at
3 the Town Hall?

4 >>: I don't believe there is.

5 >>: There should be. Either a loop
6 system or some -- what is it?

7 Radio frequency?

8 (Inaudible.)

9 >>: Yes, like that. The Commission of
10 Hard of Hearing would be a great resource to work on
11 that.

12 Ms. Fletcher: If I can jump in and
13 affirm Janice's recommendation, because in thinking of
14 effective communication, there is a lot of things you
15 want to get smart about, and I think we made a
16 recommendation that there be, you know, a person really
17 designated to be an expert to know who is to reach out,
18 to know how much time you need to be able to get a CART
19 Interpreter or ASL interpreter, but keep the equipment

20 functional, charged up and one of the things so great
21 about our commission here in Massachusetts, is that you
22 can get all jumbled up on the choices of what
23 technology to get, and for them to come out and
24 recommend, that's the expenditure of some resources to
25 get it done right. So just that's -- you know, we can

28

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 do the training on effective communication across the
2 board, and that is a free training out of the ADA
3 Center but a free consultation on the technology and
4 what you should use and what circumstances, is a great
5 asset. So just reinforces that, really, important
6 community.

7 >>: Thank you very much.

8 I know that the commission -- our
9 commission has worked with your Institute for Human
10 Centered Design a great deal. I have actually
11 interpreted some of your events.

12 Ms. Fletcher: You have indeed.

13 >>: And it's been great fun, and I love
14 your physical layout. It's fabulous.

15 Ms. Fletcher: That ante space downtown,
16 Janice?

17 >>: I guess it's empty now, but when I
18 have been there, it's been packed.

19 Ms. Fletcher: Thank you.

20 Thank you.

21 >>: I think, really, those were mostly
22 my issues. Do people still use TTYs?

23 Do people call you on the TTY, Valerie?

24 Ms. Fletcher: We actually have not had
25 a TTY call in some time, a number of years. We talked

29

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 to the Department of Justice about this, Janice, and
2 there is still saying it's in the law, but the reality
3 is that it's been superseded by way better technology.
4 It's way easier. It doesn't require fancy equipment,
5 and it's in your pocket.

6 >>: Right. Really, that actually
7 covers everything that I had. I am done. I will turn
8 off my -- I will turn me to mute.

9 Ms. Fletcher: Janice, one point on your
10 point about accessible pedestrian crossings. You said
11 dangerous intersection. One of the things that we have
12 talked about with the town is in terms of accessible
13 pedestrian crossings, there is something that usurps

14 every other priority, and that is request by a person
15 with a disability to add accessible pedestrian crossing
16 signals, that are in locations that are critical to
17 their ability to participate in the community
18 functions. So just opened an opportunity to make note
19 of that.

20 >>: So my husband is deaf, so -- he
21 could request that there be.

22 >>: Yes.

23 >>: Oh, hot damn.

24 Ms. Fletcher: And beat him to the top
25 of the list, because he is a person with a disability

30

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 with a particular need in a particular location. So
2 that's just -- it's hard to pull that out of, you know,
3 the complex guidance on accessible signals. An
4 individual making request is something to be aware of.

5 >>: To whom should he make that
6 request?

7 Ms. Fletcher: The people at the town,
8 Julian --

9 >>: It's a great question and those are
10 made to the select board, Janice.

11 >>: Okay.

12 >>: We can also follow-up one-on-one

13 after this and talk about it, and I can talk with my

14 senior transportation planner about the options. There

15 have been a lot of conversations about that, not that

16 intersection specifically, that part of it but the part

17 of it goes across -- the crosswalk that is there, and

18 we actually relocated parking spaces to make it

19 visible.

20 >>: He was in the middle of that

21 crosswalk in January late afternoon, car came by,

22 slowed down, hit him, and then went up Paul Revere

23 Road, and no one know who it was or where they went or

24 anything. I will make that request. Thanks.

25 >>: You are welcome.

31

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 Ms. Fletcher: Are there other

2 questions?

3 Darcy.

4 >>: I have lots, but I will do some

5 sort of general things. I noticed a pattern when I was

6 reading it over again today. It would be very helpful,

7 I think, for that spreadsheet, you know at the end for

8 each building, if you had a column that was category,
9 like bathrooms or parking or whatever, sort of general
10 category, and a specific impairment that it's doing
11 something for, like, aimed at the visually impaired?

12 Aimed at hearing impaired. That would
13 help us when we make these decisions to know which sort
14 of which group we are helping because there are clearly
15 ones that are a priority that serve all impairments,
16 basically, generally speaking, and then there are ones
17 that are very specific as in, We do a fairly bad job
18 with, you know, hearing impaired, and we would like to
19 do a much better one, but some of the things that we do
20 for the visually impaired also help the mobility
21 impaired. So I just think it would be nice to have
22 that category as well.

23 And in terms of priorities, frankly, if
24 I had to make a list, I would say rest rooms first.
25 There is a famous quote about we are not angels.

32

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 That's basically and something that is driving me nuts,
2 that core reason know virus place open up a public park
3 and not open -- it's just -- I can't understand why
4 they are making that decision that makes no sense to me

5 at all. So I say rest rooms first and then entrances
6 next and then guy with things like parking and website.
7 But that's just me, and we will have to discuss it.

8 >>: Could I respond to that first
9 question or do you have more to say about that?

10 >>: Which one?

11 Ms. Fletcher: About the overarching
12 concern with, Who does this benefit.

13 >>: Ah!

14 Yes.

15 Ms. Fletcher: If respond because it's
16 something that we deal with every day, and I think that
17 this is a very savvy group of people who know that the
18 standards, the ADA standards before them, as well as
19 the MAB, pay an overarching attention to people who use
20 wheel mobility. In truth, they pay particular
21 attention people who use a particular type of wheel
22 mobility, actually the manual chair and this is -- this
23 is a legacy of a time when that was a more significant
24 reason for disability than it is today. We have -- we
25 do extensive demographic analysis. So in our region we

1 are fairly typical of the nation. You have 20 percent

2 of the adult population is people with disabilities.
3 Only 1.4 percent of the population people that use
4 wheel mobility.

5 >>: We saw a presentation at the
6 Massachusetts Office of Disabled, that I thought it was
7 your ADA Center that was collecting that, survey.

8 Ms. Fletcher: We do that and then we do
9 it in all different ways. So --

10 >>: That's a stunning statistic,
11 really.

12 Ms. Fletcher: It's phenomenal. They
13 are not wheelchair users. It's important for people to
14 understand this. One of the frustrations, Darcy, is
15 that in dealing with or architectural community, for
16 example, they look at the standards as being the ADA.
17 The reality is that the standards are a part of the
18 ADA. Equally important are the regulations, which
19 define who is a person of disability and thus, who has
20 rights, but they are pervasively just left on the shelf
21 without attention. So this is a critical issue. I am
22 so glad you brought it up, because the standards and we
23 have to -- we have to do an existing condition review
24 to understand compliance with those standards, but it's
25 part of how we structure things to not overlay the

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 standards, and recognize that the regulations need to
2 be part of what people are educated to understand, just
3 why we spend so much time on, do we have an
4 infrastructure that's protecting all the people, rights
5 beyond people who are wheelchair users. There are
6 people that have trouble walking, and wheelchair use
7 accessibility benefits all those people wonderfully.
8 But if you are forgotten, the regulation defines a
9 larger class of people, you have failed to serve them
10 equally. It's a complex problem where we are working
11 the stating agency now that hasn't seen anyone using
12 wheelchair in more than a dozen years, and we are
13 trying to help them become more accessible for the
14 people that they serve who have not apparent conditions
15 but loads of them. So I will get off my high horse,
16 but it's an important thing for people to understand.

17 >>: To that same point, it's important
18 to recognize that Arlington has something like 34
19 percent of its population over the age of 60, and that
20 comes with a combination of many minor disabilities,
21 propound themselves as well as significant
22 disabilities. And what I like -- what I saw in your
23 report was an emphasis on inclusionary design, not just

24 adherence to ADA regs, but how can we more include
25 people in use of these buildings. You may not qualify

35

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 as having significant disability, but because of the
2 nature of their age, they have a combination of needs
3 that enable them to use the resource.

4 Ms. Fletcher: Can I suggest that you
5 resend along data broken out by age and including sight
6 and hearing, because we have actual data, how many
7 people, and I think that might be useful. We share it
8 widely because we want people to be able to use it for
9 advocacy. If you can say the population over 60 is the
10 population we need to be thinking about for sensory
11 limitations in high proportion. People kind of wake
12 up. It seems -- people wakes up. It seems
13 self-evident to this group, but it doesn't seem
14 self-evident to everyone.

15 If you say this study says, "This people
16 and this age cohort, you have a heck of a tool for
17 planning and prioritization. We will make sure you get
18 that accessible format.

19 >>: I am on the Disability Committee
20 and on the Elder Commission.

21 Ms. Fletcher: Perfect.
22 >>: That would be helpful. I also
23 would like to ask a question if I could at this point.
24 Finding at the Gibbs School where the sixth graders
25 are, if I heard correctly, had to do with accessibility

36

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 into parts of the building?
2 My question IS what do sixth graders do
3 in Arlington if they can't go into that building?
4 Was -- did I just mishear it?
5 I do have a hearing disability.
6 Ms. Dufresne: I will have to go back
7 and see, but, yes, that is one of the crucial schools
8 where there are -- is one school that serves sixth
9 graders so Gibbs School and artisan is really important
10 to fix. I am not sure exactly where -- I might need to
11 go into the report to see.
12 >>: I am just curious. I may have
13 misinterpreted.
14 Ms. Dufresne: I know that was one where
15 a lot of renovation had gone on recently and so it
16 seems like a lot of progress was made, but there is
17 still some issues.

18 >>: That actually leads to another
19 question that I wanted to ask.
20 >>: Do you want to ask your question
21 while we are looking at this. Would that be all right,
22 Paul?
23 >>: Yes.
24 >>: It was -- how do I put this?
25 I know it's not the focus of this

37

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 report, but it pointed out something to me very
2 sharply, which is that when we look at the schools, the
3 vast -- I think all of those schools in fact, have been
4 renovated recently. The ADA hasn't changed notably in
5 the times since they have been renovated so basically,
6 I know the difference between, you know, things that
7 required by the ADA and city are now saying best
8 practice aren't required, but I am very worried that we
9 are just about to spend over \$3 million for a high
10 school we are about to redo the Fox. We are about to
11 redo the DPW building, and it's not that I want to
12 point fingers and blame people, but I feel like
13 everyone of those schools, some of those mistakes
14 should not have been happening. The architect should

15 have known better and the construction people should
16 have known better. How do we going forward, fixing all
17 of these old stuff but I don't want to say we are
18 fixing the older buildings and get a brand-new high
19 school and walk into it, and say, well, here is 30,000
20 needed to spend for XYZ. So how do we kind of finesse
21 that?

22 >>: If I might, Valerie. It's a really
23 good question, and my own experience on this topic is
24 that there are different ways it can be handled. First
25 I will say even though you have a lot of amazing

38

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 architectural firms out there, believe it or not, there
2 is a lot of architectural firms. Not every architect
3 is as fluent in ADA -- it can vary and these details
4 that it comes down to usually a lot of details can be
5 problematic in final construction and what is done.
6 Part two is the users. The users can change things in
7 the building that can unfold what formally was
8 compliant. They may store things in the wrong place or
9 not take care of things and things like that.

10 During projects, one way to think about
11 this going forward, we have sort ever not necessarily

12 third party, but a code compliance person, like
13 somebody who specifically does ADA code compliance to
14 do sort of a sweep through before a project goals
15 through, like the final documents and out to bid and
16 things like that. That might be a thing to think about
17 going forward and advocate for, and I would be curious
18 if Meghan pore Valerie have other suggestions. It's a
19 very good point. I also note I am so sorry to Ellen
20 that has had her hand raised. I didn't have the
21 participant menu open so I didn't see that but after we
22 are done answering this, I am going to call O Paul has
23 left. I don't know that happened to him so I will go
24 to Ellen, but Valerie or Meghan.

25 Ms. Fletcher: Meghan, can I speak to --

39

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 Darcy, you want to jump in?

2 >>: If fill has a question I have one
3 more, and I do it at the end.

4 Ms. Fletcher: It is the sad reality
5 sections deteriorated in 30 years not gotten better for
6 all kind of reasons. Architects are taught about
7 accessible requirements the same time they are taught
8 about the plumbing code, and the electrical code.

9 These are the necessary evils you have to live with.
10 That is an unfortunate way to be taught about the Civil
11 Rights of people who need design to work for them. So
12 that sets up a problem that persists. People fail to
13 realize that you got a contract, and if people are
14 knowledgeable about the law, can you make sure that if
15 a building is finished and has non-compliant feature,
16 just baseline accessible, it's in your contract that
17 they have to meet the requirements of the law and if
18 they don't, it is their burden to fix it. But you have
19 to know what to look for, and we strongly recommend
20 that having resign review during the construction
21 process a cheap way to avoid buying a pig in a poke,
22 you know, a problem, and it's so pervasive for people
23 to think, The architect knows that stuff. I don't have
24 to have anybody look at that.

25 We get called in to do the inclusive or

40

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 universal design overview and recommendations, but we
2 never do it without also saying we got look at the
3 accessibility because we will promise you, it will save
4 you a fortune to just catch things before they are
5 built. Any way, it's something that makes sense many I

6 am sorry it's necessary. I help hope that we -- I hope
7 that we can change that so people see this as a design
8 opportunity and not as a burden.

9 >>: Ellen, are you ready?

10 >>: Yes, I am ready.

11 Thank you.

12 First of all, thank you so much doing
13 this. Comprehensive plan in looking at the variety of
14 disabilities and accessibility that we need to address.
15 We certainly have a lot of work cut out to do and
16 figuring out the priorities and the cost and how to do.
17 That one quick comment and something else I wanted to
18 say. As a wheelchair user, there are other
19 disabilities that also benefit from things that are
20 helpful to people with mobility impairment.

21 For example, someone with a chronic
22 medical condition like heart disease or respiratory
23 illness, also benefits from not having to go upstairs,
24 for example, even if there is a smaller percentage of
25 whole chair user, there are a lot of people that

41

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 benefit from the accommodations that are particularly
2 helpful for wheelchair users. That might be under

3 recognized. Want to point that out.

4 And then I appreciated also the
5 prioritization of places of public accommodation and
6 municipal property. So, for example, I live a few
7 blocks from the town center, and I went for a stroll
8 this morning with my dog, my service dog, and just a
9 ten-minute, you know, traversing through the center of
10 town that also includes three of the four subsidized
11 housing buildings that are for people, you know, people
12 with disabilities, the elderly, you know, also to get
13 into the town center where the church is and public
14 building, et cetera, in ten minutes, I ran into 10
15 different barriers and obstacles and made navigation
16 difficult and hard to pass along narrow place, curb
17 cuts, conditions that were crumbling, that you were
18 referring to potential liabilities for the town.

19 So I am cognizant for myself, but also
20 for other people, and see accidents waiting to happen,
21 and so I really, you know, want to emphasize that this
22 is important to address and it also just personally,
23 it's been a real struggle for me, and several years to
24 go with an article in the advocate that showed myself
25 and my dog, and there is the sidewalk, that is the

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 closest way to get into the town, I don't use at all
2 because it's slanted and very narrow and I feel as
3 though I am going to go over my wheelchair into
4 traffic. And even though it's the direct most quickest
5 route, I don't take it, and I tell other people to
6 avoid it because if you have any difficulty walking,
7 balance, et cetera, it's quite dangerous, and it's just
8 exhausting to try to get around town when you encounter
9 so many different obstacles and barriers and sometimes
10 it just makes me not even want to leave my home and of
11 course that's -- it's -- it just -- it, um, it prevents
12 me from getting into places, like public buildings,
13 being able to shop in town when those things used to be
14 open and make it really difficult that there are so
15 many obstacles every time I leave my home, every time I
16 try to get anywhere. So I just wanted to make that
17 point, that it's really important to work on these
18 things. I am so glad this plan does point out certain
19 things, and I am really glad to be, you know, a part of
20 addressing this, so thank you.

21 Ms. Fletcher: Thank you, Ellen.

22 Just a reminder that there are ten times
23 more people having difficulty people walking. If there
24 wasn't accessibility routes for wheelchairs, it would

25 be a far more difficult world for people walking. They

43

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 have issues like foot neuropathy, arthritis, the common
2 reason for disability among adults in America.

3 >>: Right and folks with those
4 difficulties do have problems with, yeah, with -- thank
5 you for pointing that out.

6 Ms. Fletcher: I appreciate that.

7 >>: Thank you, Ellen.

8 Ms. Dufresne: Darcy, did you have
9 another question or are there other folks participating
10 with other comments or questions?

11 >>: It's not a -- that's good question.
12 Basically, the lesser options should be offered. So
13 talks about providing another accessible entrance near
14 the front, and that's going to be very expensive, but I
15 know that there is way that we can do a not perfect,
16 but there is an entrance with a sloped ramp that we
17 used when the elevator wasn't working to get into the
18 Community Room and downstairs and stuff. And so I kind
19 of want those lesser options, like if we are not going
20 to pay this big expensive amount to get the access from
21 the Town Hall, Town Hall access from the outside, at

22 least two steps in terrible condition, can we have a
23 handrail with them?

24 You know what I am saying?

25 It's like if we don't have the \$20,000,

44

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 maybe we can spend a thousand and still help a lot.

2 >>: Right and the prioritization is
3 really not about cost, which was highlighted. It was
4 really about different types of priorities in terms of
5 usability, users, and access. I think cost is another
6 variable, and these are only cost estimates right now,
7 and I think any intervention we make or any
8 improvements that are made, it's -- or any improvements
9 that are made are context specific, but you are right,
10 there should be things that we can do in the immediate
11 that would help to eliminate a lot of these issues. We
12 are trying to do it in a way that will address the
13 issue permanently, not temporarily, I want to say.
14 That's the goal of the transition plan, to get us in
15 the -- on that track and I forgot to mention this
16 earlier.

17 After we finish this whole planning
18 process, we put into the capital plan, you know, a

19 small amount, modest, but at least getting the
20 opportunity thinking about a dedicated source that will
21 do ADA improvements across town, every year annually so
22 that's in the five-year plan now, over a year again,
23 it's modest. The parks and -- already been doing that,
24 but not any -- every time you see a capital request you
25 don't see anything that relates to ADA and so, you

45

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 know, having talked -- I go to the capital planning
2 committee, because of my role in managing few
3 properties that were talked about in this planning
4 process, but as part of that, I also talked with them
5 about the importance of making sure that we find a way
6 to basically fund these improvements. We have a
7 responsibility, and I think many of have you note add
8 liability so. Thumbs up there.

9 Well, are there any other comments or
10 questions?

11 If not, I will say that we will take --

12 Ms. Fletcher: Meghan has actually --

13 Meghan, I brag about your training on
14 plan -- I think every disability commission is burdened
15 with reviewing things. People say, well, you know,

16 look at my plans for the high school for example. No
17 one, you know, is taught this in the normal course of
18 growing up and going to school. You were not taught
19 how to read an architectural plan. We have seen --
20 it's been very dramatic. The building goes up because
21 they don't hear anything from the commission, because
22 they didn't hear anything, and it goes up and it's
23 wrong. It's hard to replan if you are not trained in
24 these things, and Meghan developed a training for the
25 layman, targeted to people with disabilities how to

46

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 read plans, looking for accessibility. You might want
2 to just think about doing a training for the Disability
3 Commission so you can at least get the asset of knowing
4 what you are looking at when you ask for plans that
5 you want to see before it goes too far. But it's a
6 terrific training, and I am just telling you that you
7 might want to by asking for it.

8 >>: We will take it.

9 Ms. Fletcher: Great.

10 >>: We are not shy.

11 Ms. Fletcher: Can probably do it on

12 Zoom.

13 >>: Yes. Yes, I think that for
14 following up from tonight, I guess -- not through me.
15 I am sure Jill will follow-up directly with you and
16 others with the presentation we heard tonight, the
17 recording when we have that, so that can be shared and
18 the other material that was actually part of an earlier
19 presentation, but was made to the ADA team that worked
20 on the self-evaluation and Transition Plan, which is
21 about sort of the demographics and a little bit more
22 details about the community and in comparison to the
23 Greater Boston region and Massachusetts as a whole.

24 Janice?

25 It was a great presentation earlier.

47

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 Janice?

2 >>: I have a quick question. In the
3 recording, I am not familiar with Zoom and the
4 recording; is the caption part of the recording?

5 >>: That's a good question. I think
6 they are probably a separate file that comes with it,
7 but I would defer to Jill or Meghan.

8 >>: Typically, with the recording
9 captured and process you can get visual with audio and

10 get a full transcript as well, or you can just get
11 audio. So it gives you three separate files, but I
12 don't know if the captioning. I didn't have it on. So
13 I don't know.

14 Ms. Fletcher: We paid for a captioner,
15 and we have excellent captions.

16 >>: That's what Teri is doing right
17 now, right?

18 >>: I understand that. But when it's
19 later on, if I want my husband to see some of this, the
20 only way he would have access is through the captions.

21 Ms. Fletcher: They will be included and
22 it won't be an automatic method. We have the
23 professional giving her interpretation tonight.

24 >>: Thank you.

25 And, Teri, thank you for your

48

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 captioning.

2 CART REPORTER: You are welcome.

3 >>: Ellen, I want to check. Your hand
4 was up from earlier.

5 >>: That's right. I didn't lower it.

6 >>: Okay. So thank you, everybody, and

7 I know this was a closed group tonight. Sorry for what
8 happened earlier. That was terrible. We lost some
9 people, but we will follow-up with everybody that was
10 around earlier as well, and I will just turn it over to
11 Jill, who might have other closing things to add, and
12 to say thank you again. Thank you so much to Valerie
13 and Meghan, actually, for all of you that are working
14 on this project. It was great working with your team,
15 and your team of people who helped with the
16 self-evaluation was also amazing as well as all the
17 staff who helped, they are not participating right now,
18 but it was a great meeting with Town Hall and cross
19 departments and commission and all your support, and I
20 know he is not part of the town's part of the work any
21 more, but Jack Jones really did a lot of work on this
22 topic for decades and really actually was the first
23 person to put together the Transition Plan in 1994. So
24 really appreciate that legacy that he left, and I am so
25 excited for all the work moving forward, and I am --

49

DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

1 >>: Thank you Meghan and Valerie. This
2 has been wonderful, and we will put it out for folks to
3 see, and if I get any questions, I will send them your

4 way and thanks everyone for attending if you have
5 questions or anything reach out to me, and I can put my
6 e-mail in the chat box as well, and then I will send
7 out the follow-up to everyone.

8 >>: Thank you all.

9 Ms. Fletcher: Thanks.

10 >>: Thank you.

11 >>: And I am going to stop the
12 recording.

13 >>: Good night.

14 Ms. Fletcher: Thank you.

15 >>: Thank you.

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